

# **New Hope Creek Corridor Advisory Committee**

## **Minutes of meeting of Dec. 13, 2007**

**Present: Edeburn, Fowler, Kent, Goebel, Olive, Harrison, Welch, Greg Schuster, Helen Youngblood**

- (1) Hollow Rock planning committee. The next meeting will be held in January. Healy suggested that the committee not forget about our previous suggestion of a pedestrian link between Hollow Rock and the Forest View School, so that environmental education classes need not take a bus. Edeburn said he had heard that monies for park development from Orange County might not be available for several years, given other demands on them.
- (2) Proposed Epcon development on Farrington Rd which would access sewer through Leigh Farm. This has been resubmitted to planning committee. Staff has recommended denial (it had been denied previously). Healy noted that there is a need to make sure that the staff report includes Leigh Farm impacts, which are not obvious as the development itself lies on the other side of I-40.
- (3) Trammell Crow project on Garrett Rd. Healy had testified, on behalf of the NHCCAC, in favor of the project, which was approved by Durham City Council. Concerns were raised at Council about the old Garrett house, and the developer agreed to donate \$10K toward the cost of moving it to another location. We have to make sure that Mark Bowles of TCR follows through on his promise to donate a public access easement to the entire unbuildable part of the property. Youngblood expressed a concern that pedestrian access between the TCR development and Oak Creek Shopping Center, now beside the new road that will be built, would be better if it was along the road itself.
- (4) Welch noted that the existing Sandy Creek trail is too short to be a good hiking opportunity and raised the possibility of building a trail extension along the sewer easement through the upland forest. It could be done by volunteers, perhaps from Durham Academy, New Hope Audubon Society, Boy Scout Troop 461 or residents of the bordering housing complex. The estimated length of the new loop would be half a mile. Goebel noted that it can be very wet when (if??) it rains. More signage is also needed. Schuster said Durham high school students are required to do 8 hours of community service, and this could be part of such a project. Welch noted the need for publicity after such a trail is completed. Looking beyond Sandy Creek Park, Youngblood said she would check on the possibility of getting a trail easement behind the candle shop on Cornwallis Road, the missing link between Sandy Creek and Duke University trails.
- (5) JORDAN LAKE PLAN REVISION. The Corps of Engineers is revising its 20 year old plan for Jordan Lake. Due to complaints by DOST and the NHCCAC,

the comment period has been extended to Jan. 18. A copy of the draft plan and maps is available on the Jordan Dam website [www.saw.usace.army.mil/jordan/index.htm](http://www.saw.usace.army.mil/jordan/index.htm)

Olive said that the primary emphasis of the Jordan Lake plan should be protection of the watershed for human water use. Goebel observed that a larger water supply could facilitate growth. Youngblood asked whether the water allotments (among local jurisdictions) were still current. She also suggested that we provide the Corps with current data on how much land along the New Hope has been protected to date. Healy said that the old plan has very outdated information on trails, and does not include many current and planned trails, both hiking and cycling. Youngblood said one issue is who will manage trails in the future. It was noted that a growing population requires not only more water, but also more recreational land. Schuster said the old plan is more land oriented than water oriented. It was suggested that the water impoundment areas that the Corps created in southern Durham and Orange Counties, originally created for waterfowl habitat, are being eyed as possible drinking water storage areas. Edeburn said that NC State University might be considering selling its New Hope Forest, which is very close to Jordan Lake.

The Committee agreed to try to coordinate its comments with DOST. Healy, Kent and anyone else who wishes to volunteer will draft some comments to present to the January NHCCAC meeting. \

(6) RT. 15-501 BRIDGE. This is now under construction, with a completion date of summer 2010. Harrison said that NCDOT has committed to a design that will provide 4 lanes for traffic at all times during construction. Kent said that the south wall of the new bridge is being built to permit construction of a cantilevered transit lane. This might, pending long-term transit use, permit construction of a hiking/cycling lane on the outside of the bridge. It was noted that any deer fence that would be constructed should be coordinated with anything we might suggest with regard to trail/cycling access along 15-501.

(7) TURKEY FARM ROAD BRIDGE. UPDATE. Kent and Healy have been following this through the process of NCDOT trying to secure Corps of Engineers and NC Division of Water Quality permits. The Corps approved the NCDOT categorical exemption in mid-December. As of this writing, January 5, the bridge permit was still pending before DWC, but, following our personal meeting with DWC staff, it appeared that they were inclined to approve the application as submitted. In the meantime, the matter has been accepted for possible legal action by the Duke University Environmental Law Clinic, and clinic director Ryke Longest has been researching legal options and communicating NHCCAC concerns (primarily damage to mussel habitat and lack of provision for trail and wildlife passage as a consequence of a bridge design that is considerably different from the present bridge) to relevant state agencies. There appear to be sound legal grounds for appealing permit issuance and for seeking further environmental review, based on NCDOT disregard of the state endangered species act, as well as various regulations governing when categorical exemptions are allowed. There

are also possible problems with the fact that multiple alternative bridge designs were not considered and evaluated by NCDOT. Very recently, a letter has been sent by Barry Jacobs, chair of the Orange County Board of Supervisors, to NCDOT calling their attention to the New Hope Plan and asking for further consideration of the environmental impacts of the proposed bridge design.

**Next meeting Thursday, Jan. 10, 2008 5 pm**  
**Forest View Elementary School**